

IS A PRINCIPAL CERTIFICATE A PASSPORT TO SALARY ENHANCEMENT OR TO ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS IN SCHOOLS?*

Athanase Gahungu

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of an Illinois metropolitan program that prepares teachers for administrative and supervisory positions in schools by analyzing, over a 10-year period, its employment outcomes. Overall, from 1995 to 2005, 503 students graduated from the program, 451 of whom with Illinois principal certificates. By Fiscal Year 2007, 168 of the certified candidates had held administrative positions in public schools in Illinois; 38 had served as principals. This rate falls short of the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) 2.0 ratio of new certificates issued to new positions filled upon which educator supply and demand projections are made each year. It was recommended that the program continue strengthening practical experiences for its candidates, and expand networking relationships, not just within the city's public school system, but also with suburban school districts. Candidates will then have exposure to more prospective employers. Because of the competitive nature of the administrative sector, it was also recommended that the program work with the schools to develop mechanisms for valorizing and utilizing the leadership skills and technical competencies of the ever-increasing numbers of teachers with administrative certificates, but employed in non-administrative positions.



NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a scholarly contribution to the knowledge base in educational administration.

Introduction

Several reports have pointed to the shortage of school principals in the state of Illinois and in the nation. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics had predicted that, through 2008, there would have been up to a 20% increase in vacancies for educational administrators (Akiba & Reichardt, 2002; Copland, 2001). The

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same Bureau (Ferrandino, 2001) had reported that 40% of principals working in US schools were nearing retirement. According to Harris (2001), that same year, it was estimated that the average principal was 50 years old and that 40% of principals would be eligible for retirement within the following five years.

However, in Illinois, the type of shortage that is reported could lead to some misinterpretation. As Table 1 shows, there appears to be more people certified as administrators each year than there are openings for administrative applicants (ISBE, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). In the 2007 Supply and Demand report, the Illinois School Board of Education (ISBE, 2007) explained, “Due to competition from private schools and industry, it is desirable to produce at least two people for every opening to ensure an adequate supply of quality applicants for Illinois public schools” (p. 9). In this perspective, the State of Illinois has been exceeding the ratio of 2.0 each year since Fiscal Year 2003.

Table 1

Production of Administrative Staff in the State of Illinois, 2003 to 2007

	FY2003	FY 2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007
First Time Certificates Issued Previous Year	1628	1829	2248	2281	2382
First Timers Hired	537	709	885	786	774
Cumulative Number of First Time Certificates Not Hired the Following Year	1091	2211	3574	5069	6677
Ratio of First Time Certificates to First Timers Hired	3.0	2.6	2.5	2.9	3.1

Table 1

The numbers reported in Table 1 do not include provisional administrative certificates issued to individuals who hold administrative certificates from other states. Table 1 does not show, either, the ratio of cumulative numbers of certified people who are not hired the following year to the number of first timers hired, which, over the 2003-2007 period alone, would be 8.6 by the close of 2007. Could this trend of administrative staff production, and even if a substantial group of current principals were to retire, lead one to speculate that the job market might soon saturate? The same apprehension was raised by Baker, Orr and Young (2007) when they observed, “Nationally, postsecondary institutions appear to be producing credentials at a rate that far exceeds anticipated turnover. In 2003 alone, nearly 16,000 master’s degrees in educational leadership were granted, enough to lead 16% of America’s schools” (p. 300).

As clarified in ISBE’ 2007 Educator Supply and Demand report, this apparent over-production is needed for the quality and competitiveness of the educational system. The question is whether the schools are adequately equipped to effectively utilize the managerial and leadership skills brought by holders of administrative certificates who are employed in non-administrative positions. ISBE’s 2007 report clarifies the discrepancy between this apparent over-supply and the limited demand as follows,

In order to be able to say whether there is an over- or under-supply of educators, it is necessary to first determine whether or not enough educators are being produced each year. While an under-supply would

definitely indicate an area of educator shortage, the converse is not necessarily true. For example, while there is an abundance of Administrative and Guidance Counselors credentials issued each year, many districts still find it difficult to fill vacancies in those positions. (ISBE, 2007, p. 9).

Roza, Celio, Harvey, and Wishon (2003) concur with the ISBE's assessment, and argue that the perception that there is a shortage of principals may be a matter of interpretation. According to the authors, it cannot be questioned that there are more people certified to fill principal positions than there are vacancies. Therefore, it seems pertinent to investigate how many graduates seek and find administrative positions, and how many may not even apply. Should the majority of graduates not become interested in administrative positions, would the eventuality have implications, if any, for a general administration program? Any attempt to answer these questions must take into account the professional goals and intentions of the students as they enroll into general administration programs. Do the students' goals and the goals of their academic programs match? For instance, the general administration program at hand unequivocally describes its purpose as follows:

The General Administration Option is designed to prepare individuals for educational administrative and supervisory positions and to upgrade the skills of those individuals who presently serve in such positions. Upon completion of the program, individuals will qualify for careers in educational administration, including: Elementary or Secondary School Assistant Principal; Elementary or Secondary School Principal; High School Dean; Department Chair; and District Director of Curriculum.

Levine (2005) cautions faculty and administrators that such a goal may not be realistic as it fails to consider students who are not interested in administrative positions. Levine argues that not all students of educational leadership programs aspire, or are disposed, to becoming school administrators. He classifies students in educational leadership into three categories: 1) current and future school administrators, 2) teachers earning degree primarily for salary enhancement, and 3) future researchers in school leadership.

What is more, for students aspiring to become school administrators, obtaining such positions has become less predictable; it is no longer enough to graduate from a general administration program, become certified by the state, and start applying for principal positions. For instance, in the Chicago public school system in Illinois, another phase has been added to the route to the principalship. In 2003, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) established the Office of Principal Preparation and Development (OPPD) as part of its Human Capital Initiative. In accordance with CPS Board Policy # 04-0225-PO1 of 2-25-04, "All aspiring CPS principals are required to demonstrate their instructional and managerial leadership through a series of performance-based assessments in order to be eligible for a CPS principalship" (CPS, 2006). To become eligible for a principal position within the metropolitan public schools, aspiring principals go through a complex selection system that includes completing a self-assessment package, submitting a formal application, writing an essay, and putting together a principal competencies portfolio.

The question is whether it would make a difference for the program's strategic planning, curricular decision-making, student advising, and faculty development, if information on such post-graduation added hurdles were consistently incorporated in the program's mission. With this clarification in view, the purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the general administration program at this medium-size metropolitan university by analyzing its employment outcomes. The term "general administration" will be used interchangeably with the term "principal."

Three times each year, in Fall, Spring, and Summer, several tens of candidates complete the program and qualify for the Illinois Type 75 General Administrative Certificate (Type 75). Of the alumni/ae who graduated from 1995 to 2005, it became interesting to identify how many obtained administrative positions, and how many did not. It also seemed necessary to ask how long after graduation the students obtained administrative employment. What factors helped graduates obtain administrative employment, and what obstacles did they have to overcome? How has the recent creation of the Office of Principal Preparation and Development by the metropolitan school district impacted the intentions of graduates intending to seek administrative positions in the system? The researcher hopes that answers to those questions will benefit current students in the General Administration program in preparing them for careers more effectively, and faculty, in setting their teaching priorities. The study also attempted to address the role of teacher leadership. More specifically, if graduates of a general administration program do not become school administrators, are

schools ready to effectively incorporate teachers with principal certificates in school leadership?

Method

Post-graduation information for all General Administration alumni/ae who attended the General Administration program from 1995 to 2005 was collected from files kept in the Department and the Office of Records and Registration at the university. The information was then entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Using the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) Educator Certification System (<https://secqa1.isbe.net/ecs/>¹) database, a teaching employment history (teaching and administrative history, certification tests passed, areas of qualification) was queried for each alumnus. The query results were added to the spreadsheet and summarized.

Then, researchers contacted by telephone 40 alumni/ae representing all 10 years of this report, and sent them informed consent forms to participate in a post-graduation employment outcome survey. Those who consented to participate in the survey were sent a semi-structured questionnaire which asked them to elaborate on their employment status, as well as the extent to which the program had prepared them for administrative and leadership positions. Specifically, the survey asked the graduates to a) verify their post-graduation employment status, b) share challenges and opportunities they had while seeking employment in educational administration, c) share reasons for not seeking employment in educational administration, and d) evaluate the skills and knowledge acquired in the program in relation to the graduates' employability. The survey questions were based on the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Questions about instructional supervisory skills were based on Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon's (2004) tasks of supervision. Twenty-free respondents returned the questionnaires.

In April and May 2006, one administrator, one faculty member, three current students in the General Administration program, and four alumni who graduated from the program were asked to review the questions for content and relevancy. Their comments and recommendations were incorporated in the questionnaire.

Demographic and employment information obtained (e.g., time from graduation to obtaining an administrative position, number of positions held, certificates held, etc.) for each graduation class and all groups taken together was summarized in tables. The Analysis ToolPak of Microsoft Excel 2003 was used for the descriptive calculations. Where possible, summaries were grouped by gender, school level taught (K-6, K-8, high school) prior to admission to the program. Responses to open-ended questions were summarized by questions. Conclusions were drawn on the effectiveness of the general administration program at this Illinois metropolitan university as it relates its graduates' employment outcomes.

Results

From 1995 to 2005, 503 teachers who attended the program graduated with a master's degree and/or certificate in general administration (Table 2). The 503 graduates are then broken down by certification status within the Illinois State Board of Education certification system: 52 without recorded certificates and 451 with recorded certificates. For the 52 graduates without certificates, lack of certification record could mean several things. The first plausible explanation is that the graduate failed the Illinois General Administration Certification test. Today, this situation can no longer exist; the program's policy is that a student will not graduate (i.e., will not receive the master's degree and/or certificate in general administration) if s/he has not passed the state's administrative certification test. The second scenario is for students who changed their names, social security numbers, or other identifiers after graduation, such as in the case of marriage, and therefore, cannot be tracked using identifiers on file. The third scenario would be of people who, for reasons of employment (such as being employed in a school system that does not require an Illinois certificate), never registered their certificate with the Illinois State Board of Education.

This study is chiefly concerned with the 451 graduates who have registered their administrative certificates with the Illinois State Board of Education. As Table 2 shows, eight of the certified graduates did not have a teaching history in the public school system in Illinois. By the end of fiscal year 2007, 275 of the 451 certified graduates (or 61%) with a teaching history in public schools, had never been assigned an administrative position in public schools in Illinois. Overall, by the close of FY 2007, 168 graduates with

¹<https://secqa1.isbe.net/ecs/>

registered certificates (or 37.3%) had held an administrative position in public schools in Illinois at least once since graduation. Some graduating classes have been hired to administrative positions in higher proportions than other classes. For instance, the ratio of certificates to administrative positions for the 1996 and 1997 classes is 1.9 and 1.8, respectively. By contrast, the ratio is much higher for the 2000 class, at 3.6, for instance.

Table 2

1995-2006 Certified and Not Certified General Administration Graduates by Graduation Year

Year Graduated	Not Certified/ Record No	Certified				Total
		No Teaching History	Never in Administration	Held Administrative Position	Ratio of Certified to Administrative Positions	
FY 1996	1	0	11	12	1.9	24*
FY 1997	4	0	20	24	1.8	48
FY 1998	4	3	34	23	2.6	64
FY 1999	4	0	17	15	2.1	36
FY 2000	2	2	16	7	3.6	27
FY 2001	4	2	23	12	3.1	41
FY 2002	14	0	47	29	2.6	90
FY 2003	11	0	40	19	3.1	70
FY 2004	3	1	30	18	2.7	52
FY 2005	5	0	37	9	5.1	51
Total	52	8	275	168	2.7	503

Table 2

*Numbers include 2 students who graduated in Spring 1995.

Another way to look at those ratios is to use the years graduates were certified in comparison to the years they were hired to administrative positions (Table 3). It must be noted that, although a number of students graduated in 1995, the first principal certificates for the group studied were not issued until Fiscal Year 1996. Of the 14 graduates who were issued principal certificates in 1996, six were hired to administrative positions by FY 2007, or a ratio of 2.4. The best ratio was for candidates who were issued certificates in 1997 and 1998; the ratio of certificates to hires was 1.8 and 1.7, respectively. By contrast, for the 56 certificates issued in FY 2002, the ratio climbed to 3.5. The analysis of ratios for certificates issued in FY 2005 and beyond was too premature for this study, as the graduates had been on the job market for fewer than two years by the conclusion of data collection.

Table 3

Graduates Hired to Administrative Positions by Certification Years

							FY CERTIFICATE ISSUED									
							96	97	98	99	00	01	02			
FY Hired	97	0	2*													
	98	0	2	2*												
	99	1	1	4	4*											
	00	0	0	4	2											
	01	0	3	4	1	3	1*									
	02	2	2	8	5	5	3	1*								
	03	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3*							
	04	1	1	3	2	3	5	6	9	7*						
	05	1	1	3	0	2	2	3	6	7	6*					
	06	1	1	2	3	1	1	3	2	13	5					
	07	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0					
	Total Hired	6	13	30	17	13	13	16	21	27	11					
	Total Cert	14	24	51	41	34	36	56	61	75	59					
	Ratio	2.3	1.8	1.7	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.5	2.9	2.8	5.4					

Table 3

*Hired to administrative position prior to receiving certificate or during same year

In the following paragraphs, the nature of administrative assignments held by the 168 graduates with registered certificates is analyzed. Since graduation, of the 451 graduates with administrative certificates, the 168 administrators (37.3%) have assumed a wide range of administrative positions in public schools in Illinois (Table 4). The 10-year ratio of certified graduates to administrators is 3.0. The largest share of administrative positions in public schools was at its highest level in Fiscal Year 2006, when the program's contingents accounted for 141 of the Illinois public school administrative workforce, including 68 assistant principals, 26 principals, five area coordinators, five district or assistant district superintendents, and 17 directors or assistant directors, including three directors of special education. In the following paragraphs, we looked at the relationship between completing the general administration certificate at this school and assuming the position of principal.

Table 4

All Administrative Positions Held by Graduates by Fiscal Year

	Assist/District Superintendent	Assistant Principal	Business Manager	Coordinator	Principal	Assistant Principal	Assist/District Director	Other	Total
<i>continued on next page</i>									

1996				3					3
1997				5					5
1998				5		4			9
1999		1		5	4	5		1	16
2000				7	4	7	1	1	20
2001				6	8	14	2	1	31
2002	1	7	2		15	30	3		58
2003	1	7	2		14	34	5	1	64
2004				10	15	49	8	7	89
2005	1			16	18	65	9	8	117
2006	5			5	26	68	17	20	141
2007	1			9	18	48	6	12	94

Table 4

How many principals has the program produced since 1995? Of the 451 certified graduates, 38 (8.4%) have been principals in Illinois public schools at least one fiscal year (Table 5). Some classes have produced principals in higher rates than others. For instance, from the 24 graduates who were certified during FY 1997, five (20.83%) became principals over time. It took them an average 3.6 years to become principals. The following certification class (FY 1998) produced a slightly lower rate of principals (19.61%), and in a longer time (5.1 years). As many as 50% of these principals (19) were promoted from assistant principals.

Table 5

Certified Graduates Who Became Principals by Average Time to Reach Position and Transition from Assistant Principalship

Certification Fiscal Year	Total Certified	Became Principals			Were First Assistant Principals	
		Number	%	Years (Average)	Number	%
FY 1996	14*	2	14.29%	8.5	1	50.00%
FY 1997	24	5	20.83%	3.6	2	40.00%
FY 1998	51	10	19.61%	5.1	6	60.00%
FY 1999	41	5	12.20%	3.6	2	40.00%
FY 2000	34	7	20.59%	3.9	4	57.14%
FY 2001	36	1	2.78%	5	1	100.00%
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FY 2002	56	1	1.79%	4	0	0.00%
FY 2003	61	4	6.56%	2.25	2	50.00%
FY 2004	75	3	4.00%	1.7	1	33.33%
FY 2005	59**	0	0.00%	—	0	—
Total	451	38	8.43%	4.1	19	50.00%

Table 5

*FY 1996 Certificates include one issued in FY 1995

**FY 2005 Certificates include seven issued in FY 2006

Whether being an assistant principal is an end in itself or a route to the principalship is reported below. The 19 assistant principals who were promoted to the “principal” position represented only 17.9% of all assistant principals working in Illinois public schools until 2007 (Table 6). Some graduating classes had a larger share of that number than others. For example, the certification class of 2000 produced nine assistant principals; four of them (44.4%) were later promoted to the principal position.

Table 6

Certified Graduates Who Became Assistant Principals by Average Time to Obtain Position and by Promotion to the Principalship

Graduation Fiscal Year	Total Certified	Became Assistant Principals			Later Promoted to Principals	
		Number	%	Years (Average)	Number	%
FY 1996	14*	4	28.57%	6.3	1	25.00%
FY 1997	24	9	37.50%	5.2	2	22.22%
FY 1998	51	22	43.14%	4	6	27.27%
FY 1999	41	9	21.95%	3.3	2	22.22%
FY 2000	34	9	26.47%	2.9	4	44.44%
FY 2001	36	10	27.78%	2.7	1	10.00%
FY 2002	56	8	14.29%	2.1	0	0.00%
FY 2003	61	12	19.67%	1.6	2	16.67%
FY 2004	75	15	20.00%	1.4	1	6.67%
FY 2005	59**	8	13.56%	0.4	0	0.00%
Total	451	106	23.50%	2.9	19	17.92%

Table 6

In the following paragraphs, the responses of the 23 alumni/ae who returned the survey questionnaires are summarized. Five (21.7%) of the respondents were teachers, and 18 (78.3%) were administrators. All respondents were certified and worked for the Illinois State Board of Education. Forty-three percent of the respondents (n = 10) were assistant principals, and two (8.7%) were principals. In line with the information from the databases reviewed above, a number of those in administrative positions (n = 12) were hired to such positions within one year of graduation. Three respondents were already serving in administrative capacities before they were certified.

There were two sets of Likert-scale questions. The first set of seven items asked respondents to evaluate how the program prepared them for responsibilities in key leadership areas (Table 7). The second set of five items asked the respondents to evaluate the extent to which they were prepared to accomplish supervisory tasks (Table 8). In responding to the two sets of questions, no respondent provided a “Strongly Disagree” response (SD) to any of the 12 items. However, several respondents checked the NA (Not Applicable) box, which will be interpreted in this report as not having received training or skill in a given content area. Therefore, “disagree” (D) and “Not Applicable” (NA) responses are collapsed together as negative perceptions about respective contents on the questionnaire. As such, the largest negative perception was with Item 7 in the first set (Integrating Technology into Instruction and Administration) where six respondents (26.1%) reported either disagreement with the statement or had not received training in the content area (Table 7). Respondents also had a negative perception about Item 4 (21.7%) (Collaborating with Families and Community Members), and Item 5 (Acting with Integrity, Fairness, and in an Ethical Manner).

Table 7

To What Degree Did the General Administration Program at Prepare You in Doing the Following? The General Administration Program Has Prepared Me for the Responsibility of (N = 23):

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Fa- cilitating the Development, Articulation, Implemen- tation, and Stewardship of a Vision of Learning that Is Shared and Supported by the School Community.	60.9%	39.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>continued on next page</i>					

<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY.</p> <p>Advocating, Nurturing, and Sustaining a School Culture and Instructional Program Conducive to Students' Learning and Staff's Professional Growth.</p>	43.5%	56.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Ensuring Management of the Organization, Operations, and Resources for a Safe, Efficient, and Effective Learning Environment.</p>	39.1%	60.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>continued on next page</i>					

<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Collaborating with Families and Community Members, Responding to Diverse Community Interests And Needs and Mobilizing Community Resources.</p>	52.2%	26.1%	13.0%	0.0%	8.7%
<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Acting With Integrity, Fairness, and in an Ethical Manner.</p>	60.9%	26.1%	8.7%	0.0%	4.3%
<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Understanding, Responding to, and Influencing the Larger Political, Social, Economic, Legal, and Cultural Context.</p>	56.5%	43.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>continued on next page</i>					

<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Inte- grating Tech- nology into Instruction and Adminis- tration.</p>	21.7%	52.2%	0.0%	0.0%	26.1%
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Table 7

In responding to the second set of questions about supervisory tasks, at least three respondents disagreed with the statement that they could demonstrate instructional supervisory skills related to the following tasks: professional development (13%), curriculum development (13%), and action research (13%) (Table 8). In addition, while negative perceptions were not expressed (or were not pronounced) on the rest of the items, no one single item received a unanimous “strongly agree” rating from respondents. The strongest favorable opinion was expressed for Item 1 where 65% of respondents “strongly agreed” that they could demonstrate clinical supervision.

Table 8

Thanks to the General Administration Program, I Know and Can Demonstrate the Following Instructional Supervisory Skills (N = 23):

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Clinical Supervision (Providing Direct Assistance—e.g., Formal and Summative Evaluation, Classroom Observation, Conferences with Teachers, Teaching Demonstration to Help Teachers Improve Instruction).</p>	65.2%	30.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
<p>FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Group Development (Skills of Working With Groups to Solve Instructional Problems).</p>	56.5%	34.8%	8.7%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>continued on next page</i>					

FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Professional Development (Providing Professional Growth Op- portunities to Teachers).	43.5%	43.5%	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%
FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Curriculum Development (Planning, Evaluating, Revising and Modifying Curricula).	39.1%	47.8%	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%
FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Ac- tion Research (Conducting or Leading Systematic Studies with Teachers, to Understand and Improve Teaching).	47.8%	39.1%	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 8

In the following paragraphs, responses to the survey's open-ended questions are summarized. Of the 18 respondents who were in administrative positions, all but one (94.4%) thought that their positions were related to their earning an Illinois principal certificate. Eight of the 18 respondents (44.4%) had been offered an administrative position in the same organization they worked, either by recommendation or as an internal assignment. The rest of the respondents had sought and obtained administrative positions with outside organizations, through competitive application. One such graduate was working as a large school district's health education manager.

Respondents who were not administrators were asked several questions, including what was holding them from obtaining an administrative position. Three of the five respondents were still looking for positions. One of the three respondents had been a finalist for different offers, but had been told she did not have enough

administrative experience to be hired. The other two respondents did not have administrative positions, but were not seeking such positions. They reported that they were satisfied with their teaching assignments.

On the last two questions, respondents were asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Four strengths were identified: 1) the quality of faculty (13 out of 23), 2) the quality of program's curriculum (10 out of 23), 3) the cohort model (four out of 23), and 4) the practicum experience (two out of 23). Table 9 summarizes the weaknesses reported on the program. The most frequently cited area is practical preparation. Respondents reported that too many courses were theory-based. The second area was poor collaboration with school districts. On one hand, in 2003, the metropolitan school district where the program is located started an internal recruitment process for principals, through its Office of Principal Preparation and Development. Because of the new recruitment system, it is no longer enough to be issued a general administrative certificate to be considered for a principal position in the metropolitan school system. On the other hand, the program attracts teachers from suburban school districts, who are concerned that not enough is done to prepare graduates for administrative positions outside inner-city schools. Overall, these two areas of weaknesses, as well as other weaknesses reported, will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

Table 9

Program's Areas of Weaknesses (N = 23)

Weakness Areas	Examples of Statements	#
Practical Preparation and Internship	I felt that the courses were theory-based and not practical. For some courses, the requirements need to be tossed out and redone. The required projects have no relevance to administration issues. More hands-on activities. A classroom course, probably one of the two practica should deal absolutely with the daily experiences of a school principal. It should be taught by a school principal. More clinical observation in terms of classroom hours. Practicum not of caliber. Practicum needs to provide hands-on experience. More field hours should be added to the strength of the program.	15
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Collaboration with School Districts	Lack of collaboration with [large metropolitan district] or other districts—when students complete the program they should be placed in positions with a fostering relationship with veteran administrators. Some professors tend to talk only in terms of [large metropolitan school district], but many of us were not working in that system. Practicum needs to be aligned to Office of Principal Preparation and Development.	9
Educational Technology	We need a class in technology. Technology needed to be successful administrator lacking [sic]. The program needs to prepare someone for how to be a presenter	7
Professional and Group Development	The program needs to add something about collaboration and team building	3
Curricular Accommodations for Full-Time Teachers	Practicum was hard to do while teaching. The workload is too heavy in some courses for students holding down full-time jobs.	3
Financial Planning	Budgeting including budget line items and transfer from one budget line to another.	2
Extension Courses	More programs at different locations [are needed]	1
Academic Advising	Earlier graduation credit reviews	1
Employment Opportunities	Connecting administrative programs with other employment opportunities.	1
<i>continued on next page</i>		

Diversity Issues	More focus should be placed on issues of diversity. I don't feel that it was adequately addressed (if at all) in my coursework.	1
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Table 9

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

This study attempted to assess the effectiveness of a general administration program at a medium-sized metropolitan, accredited, Illinois public university by analyzing its employment outcomes, over a period of 10 years. The present study limited its scope of analysis to the program's graduates who have worked in the public school system in the state of Illinois. Employment information about the program's graduates who worked, or have worked, in teaching or administrative positions in non-public schools in Illinois was not accessible. Information for graduates who worked in other states was not included in the study, either. In addition, only 23 graduates were surveyed, and administrators were over-represented. More respondents or a more in-depth comprehensive procedure for collecting graduates' assessment of the program, such as through field interviews, might have yielded a better picture. Likewise, an analysis of graduates from comparable programs within the metropolitan area or from the rest of the state of Illinois might have made the conclusions more over-reaching.

However, despite these limitations, this study has helped to assess the extent of the general administration program's accomplishing its mission to "prepare individuals for educational administrative and supervisory positions." First, it is the first time in the history of this general administration program that an effort has been made to review its impact beyond yearly reports. Second, the majority of the program's graduates have been accounted for. Indeed, besides the 52 graduates who were not certified, or who were not traceable (i.e., because of changes in names), only an insignificant number (eight of the 451 certified graduates, or 1.8%) were not listed among employees of the Illinois public school system. Third, there did not seem to be substantial differences between the information obtained from the Illinois State Board of Education database and the information provided by the survey respondents. Therefore, the following conclusions can be made.

Connecting the Mission of General Administration Programs to Post-Graduation Employment

The general administration program at this metropolitan public university has grown substantially since 1995. Some of the concerns that survey respondents, such as the program not meeting candidates' technology needs, have already been addressed, or are being addressed. Several faculty members are currently involved in research related to issues of principal preparation. In addition, today, the program offers a course entitled "Integrating Technology in Curriculum and Instruction." Other areas of concerns, including asking the program to put emphasis on community relations or professional development, may have come as surprises in this analysis. These concerns, and others, will be brought to the attention of administrators and the faculty members involved in research on the program's missions. A number of initiatives have already been implemented to address the weaknesses reported in the survey; respondents may not have been aware of such developments. Notably, the Dean of the College of Education has established the "Dean's Professional Development Initiative" (DPDI), which supports, every year, creative and research activities aimed at improving initial and advanced teacher preparation programs. Several faculty members have developed service and research proposals with the support of the DPDI program. The present study was funded by the DPDI. The university's Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs also has launched several initiatives aimed at strengthening the school's programs. As an example of the university's commitment to program development, four faculty members from the general administration program are currently involved in research activities specifically aimed at addressing issues of school leadership preparation. Other conclusions are summarized below.

First, the question must be answered whether or not the effectiveness of a general administration program should be measured by the number of its graduates who enter administrative positions in schools. As the data from the Illinois State Board of Education showed (Table 1), projections for filling administrative positions are based on administrative certificates the state issues. For every administrative position to fill, the state

plans at least two certificates. This ratio of 2.0 ensures that the administrative positions are competitive; the excess workforce then can apply for positions in other industries and private schools. In this perspective, the state has amply met and even exceeded its projections; the ratio of new certificates to positions to fill the following year has consistently been 3.0 in 2003, 2.6 in 2004, 2.5 in 2005, 2.9 in 2006, and 3.1 in 2007.

While no allusion to the state's supply and demand projections is made in the mission of the metropolitan university's general administration program, one would expect that, for the sake of accountability and integrity, its internal ratio would be set at 2.0 or lower. With a ratio of 2.0 or lower, the university would have a competitive program. However, based on this analysis, of the 451 graduates with administrative certificates that the program produced from 1995 to 2005, only 168 of them have worked as administrators in the Illinois public school system, or a ratio of 3.0. To be in tune with the state's projections, the program's number of certified candidates hired to administrative positions would have been 226 or more. Therefore, it could be argued that at least based on producing school administrators and supervisors, the program's competitiveness must be questioned.

The second conclusion is that the road to the principalship is not easy. On average, it took 4.1 years for 38 certified graduates (8.4%) to become principals. Similarly, it took 2.9 years, on average, for 106 certified graduates to become assistant principals (23.5%), out of whom 19 were later promoted to the ultimate position of principal (17.9%). This transition to the principal position, as the graduates surveyed challenged, has become even more complicated since the metropolitan school district, the largest employer of the program's graduates, established the Office of Principal Preparation and Development (OPPD) in 2003. While the OPPD program is too recent to assess its impact on principal preparation programs, it seems fair to assume that programs without strong connections and networking relationships with the Office will be disadvantaged. That is why the program has approached the metropolitan school district, and is now one of the university programs collaborating with the district in facilitating the principal eligibility process. More specifically, two of the program's faculty members now assist aspiring principals in developing portfolios and other requirements for eligibility.

In addition to, and beyond, this initiative, the program must develop and continuously assess a post-graduation mechanism for assisting its graduates in obtaining administrative positions, not just in the metropolitan school system but also in the suburbs, the rest of the state, and in the nation. Such a mechanism would include strong network relationships with school district administrators at the local, regional, state, and national level. Faculty, internship supervisors, and administrators must be knowledgeable about, and prove solid working relationships with organizations that oversee, support, or develop school administrators. These organizations include Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, Illinois Principals Association, Illinois Association of School Boards, National association of Elementary/Secondary School Principals, and Phi Delta Kappa International. Collaborative initiatives must also be established with sister universities that prepare school administrators so that field and other professional development activities are efficiently planned and implemented.

Thirdly, the program must develop an effective process for listening to graduates from the field. Some graduates call for the program to revamp its field experience focus. While no data were collected to examine the relationship between graduates' satisfaction with their field experiences, there is no doubt that internship is a crucial stage when students and administrators forge solid professional relationships. A principal who has been shadowed by an intern will more likely recommend that intern for hiring to an administrative position rather than endorsing a teacher who has never been involved in such supervision. There appear to be two issues with the current setup of the program's practicum experience. First, teachers enrolled in the program tend to conduct their 160-hour practica solely in the elementary or high schools in which they already teach. Those are schools which are mostly in the vicinity of the program, belong to the metropolitan public school district, and likely already have other teachers with administrative certificates. The problem with this arrangement is that the teachers find themselves serving both semesters of internship (160 hours) only one school level—elementary or high school. An effective internship should allow candidates to explore administrative responsibilities in both the elementary and secondary levels, at their school of assignment and other schools. The second problem is that teachers enrolled in the program cannot afford to conduct practica outside the city's school district boundaries, for practical reasons.

To conduct practica in suburban schools, or in other schools in the city, the teachers and the program would have to do more planning. Such planning might involve finding funds, such as grants, to release teachers for the 160 hours of practicum, and hire substitutes to cover their classes. Such an arrangement would be a paradigm shift. There is no doubt that while conducting such practica/internship, teachers would be more deliberately and fully involved in mastering administrative tasks than in the current structure. As such, to the extent that the principals and other designated practicum supervisors are provided some incentive for participating, the experience could be more rewarding than it is now. First, the current mentality would eventually change that teachers are entitled to conducting administrative practica in their school of assignment just because they teach in it. Because of this false entitlement, very little has been done to involve all neighboring school district principals and superintendents (both in the city and in the suburbs) in planning internship experiences. All neighboring school district administrators ought to be presented a description of the program's internship mission, and its intent to collaborate with them on program improvement, in general, and principal preparation, in particular. Consequently, the new system would create and expand networks and collaboration with other possible employers in addition to the city's school district. In this perspective, it could be inferred that the ratio of this program's certified graduates to administrative positions might be improved by the increase in numbers of participating school districts. Therefore, it seems appropriate that the program does all in its power to listen to graduates' and other stakeholders' voices regarding placement and work assignments during internships, interactions and collaboration between the program's faculty and field supervisors, and evaluation of field experiences.

The Role of Teachers Holding Administrative Certificates, but Assigned to Non-Administrative Positions

Finally, the issue of the role of non-administrative staff, but who hold administrative certificates, must be addressed. Indeed, from 1995 to 2005, only 37% of the program's certified graduates managed to serve in some administrative capacity in a public school in Illinois at least one fiscal year. The remaining 74%, either by personal motivation or little competition, have not formally practiced school administration. The question is whether the mission of the program is compromised if its graduates do not become educational administrators and supervisors. As discussed earlier, for the sake of the program's integrity and accountability, a high rate of graduates hired to administrative positions should be planned, and the standard should be to exceed the state's expectations of a ratio of two administrative certificates per hired administrators. However, for a program to expect all (or the majority of) certified graduates to become administrators is unrealistic. As such, even the state does not intend all certified candidates to be hired to administrative positions, nor cannot it afford them all; the profession would lose its competitive nature. In fact, as shown in the Introduction section (Table 1), the number of people with first time certificates who cannot be hired to administrative positions the following year is substantially large. For the five years of 2003 to 2007, alone, based on state estimates, a ratio of cumulative certificates that were not hired to first timers hired was 8.6. These are too many people who cannot be hired. Even if 40% of school administrators were to retire, as Harris (2001) suggested seven years ago, there would still be a substantial number of certified individuals who cannot be hired to administrative positions in public schools.

In this line of thought, general administration programs may not expect all their graduates to become school administrators because of the students' personal goals and the reality of the field. However, as Baker, Orr and Young (2007) caution program administrators and faculty, "Although some overproduction is both likely and necessary to keep refreshing leadership labor market pools and enable elasticity in the labor market, gross overproduction results in inefficient use of resources that could be better directed toward improving program quality and effectiveness" (p. 310). The issue is whether program administrators and advisors have an accurate mechanism for diagnosing which students have, or do not have, intentions to become administrators.

Subsequently, a question should be raised about the pertinence and rigor of the internship and other practical activities for students not intending to become school administrators and advisors. To the extent that program advisors know who those uninterested students are, those practical, curricular and extracurricular, activities should be reserved for aspiring administrators. Programs ought to also decide whether uninterested students should complete the master's degree in general administration, and not the certification. In the current context where every student enrolled in the general administration program must pass complete two

semesters of internship and pass the state competency test to be awarded the master's degree, it may be questioned whether the mission of the program is clear about how to advise, teach, and mentor such students who are not interested in school administration. All in all, it seems that whether students make their intentions known or not at the start of the program, and whether uninterested students are appropriately accommodated or not, there will always be graduates who will not obtain administrative positions.

Therefore, there appears to be a necessity for all stakeholders to valorize the presence in schools of teachers who hold administrative certificates but are assigned to regular teaching work. The school districts that employ these teachers, with researchers and faculty in the field of educational leadership, and all others who manage supply and demand of educators, must work together to learn how to best utilize and continually enhance the leadership and managerial competencies that these people bring with them. To the extent that principal preparation programs adequately plan and execute their curricula with qualified faculty, consistently evaluate them for quality and accreditation compliance, and base instructional outcomes in solid theory and practice, there is no doubt that their graduates, even in non-administrative positions, will be great assets to the schools.

In conclusion, producing school principals, not just assistant principals or other subordinate supervisors, at competitive rates, should be the ultimate goal of a "principal" preparation program. Individual programs should strive to have, or place, the majority of their graduates in administrative positions in accordance with the missions the states gave them. However, because there will always be people who, by personal motivation or lack of opportunity, cannot achieve administrative positions, school boards and other educational agencies ought to learn how to best utilize the skills of their non-administrative staff who hold administrative certificates and credentials. Leadership is assumed by more than administrators. Educators who graduate from general administration programs should not have to wear an administrative hat to become expert leaders in their school communities, as long as they are provided opportunities conducive to shared leadership. After all, these educators have solid knowledge of school law, school finance, community relations, human resources management, clinical supervision, curriculum development, technology planning, and fundamentals of educational research. The challenge rests with the leadership programs and school communities. Can the general administration programs efficiently prepare needed school administrators, and, at the same time, intentionally and deliberately develop mechanisms for advising students who have no intentions of becoming administrators, without hurting their mission? As for school communities, can they establish efficient leadership development initiatives, and the same time, creating processes and incentives, other than salary enhancement, for acknowledging, nurturing and incorporating non-administrative leadership in their educational activities? Further research is needed to assess the ramifications of such commitment to efficient utilization of resources.

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